Modern Poetry

The Imagists

- Poetry was ahead of fiction in finding its Modernist footing
- Imagism (1909-1917) was a reaction against the sentimental and Romantic poetry of the previous century
  - They preferred a hard, clear voice, concrete images, common vernacular, and unrestricted verse
  - Their models came from Greek and Roman classics, Chinese and Japanese poetry, and the free verse of French poets
- Imagism steered poetry away from its previous subjectivity and toward a more objective perspective

Ezra Pound—Make it new!

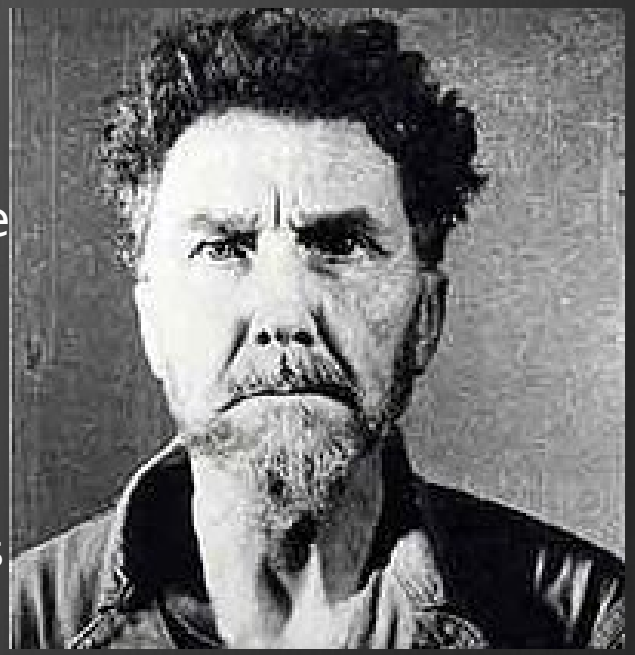
Pound's Rules

① It is better to present one image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous words.

② Use no superfluous word, no adjective which does not reveal something.

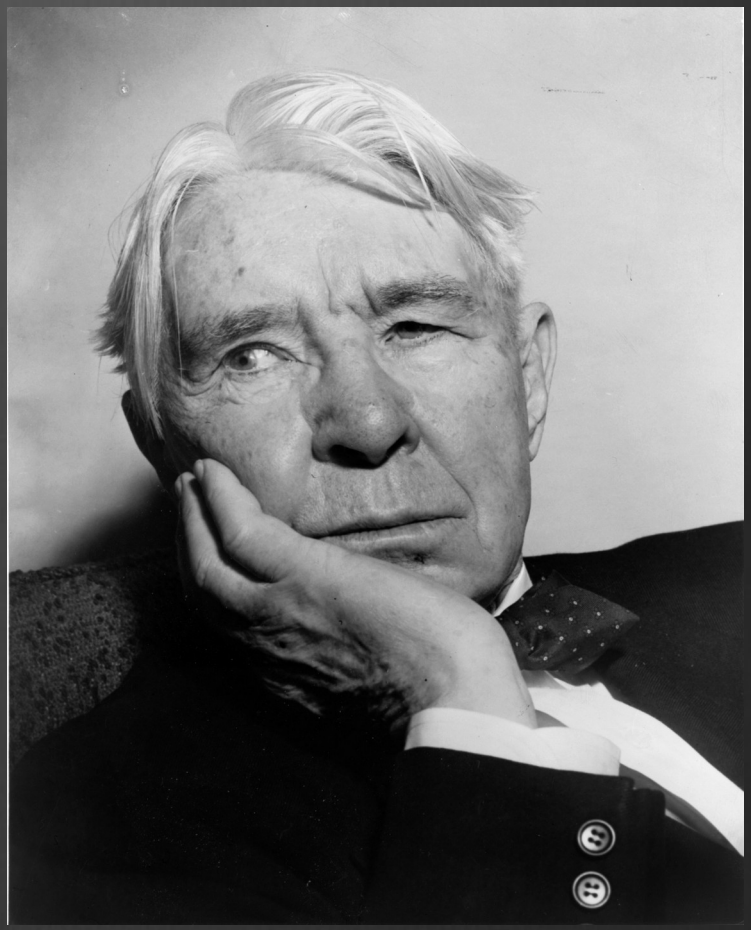
③ Don't use such an expression as 'dim lands of peace.' It dulls the image. It mixes an abstraction with the concrete. The natural object is always the adequate symbol.

④ Be influenced by as many great artists as you can, but acknowledge the debt outright, or try to conceal it.



Carl Sandburg

- “Chicago” (1916)
  - Influenced by French free verse
  - Classical traditions applied to modern subjects



1920s Slang

- Berry, bone-dollar
- Darn, Doggone
- Guy-fellow
- Hootch—whiskey
- Jeans—trousers
- Junk—rubbish
- Lid—hat
- Lounge-lizard
- To pan—condemn
- Peach of a—splendid
- Poppycock—nonsense
- To root for
- Roughneck—country
- Slick—smart
- Spill—declamatory talk
- Tightwad—miser
- Tinhorn—bluffer
- Wisenheimer—well-informed man

Slang

- Bee's Knees - An extraordinary person, thing, idea
- Berries - is attractive or pleasing; similar to bee's knees, As in "It's the berries."
- Big Cheese - The most important or influential person. Same as big shot
- Bump Off - To murder
- Carry a Torch - To have a crush on someone
- Cat's Meow - Something splendid or stylish; similar to bee's knees; The best or greatest
- Cat's Pajamas - Same as cat's meow
- Cheaters - Eyeglasses
- Crush - An infatuation
- Dogs - feet
- Dumb Dora - a stupid female
- Fall Guy - victim of a frame
- Flat Tire - A dull insipid, disappointing date. Same as pill, pickle, drag, rag, oilcan
- Frame - To give false evidence, to set up someone
- Gams - A woman's legs
- Whoopee - To have a good time
- Hard Boiled - a tough, strong guy
- Heebie-Jeebies - The jitters

- Hoofer - Dancer
- Hotsy-Totsy - Pleasing
- Jalopy - Old car
- Joint - A club, usually selling alcohol
- Keen - Attractive or appealing
- Kisser - Mouth
- Moll - A gangster's girl
- Neck - Kissing with passion
- Pinch - To arrest
- Pushover - A person easily convinced or seduced
- Ritzy - Elegant (from the hotel)
- Scram - Ask someone to leave immediately
- Sheik - A man with sex appeal (from the Valentino movies)
- Speakeasy - An illicit bar selling bootleg liquor
- Spiffy - An elegant appearance
- Stuck On - Having a crush on
- Swanky - Ritzy
- Swell - Wonderful. Also: a rich man
- Take for a Ride -To drive off with someone in order to bump them off
- Torpedo - A hired gun
- Upchuck - To vomit when one has drunk too much

Review

- Rhyme Scheme—a regular pattern of rhyming words in a poem
- Meter—rhythmical pattern in a poem
- Refrain—repeated portion
- Free verse—poetry that lacks a regular rhythmic pattern
- Imagery—descriptive language used to create word pictures for the reader
- Parallelism—repetition of a grammatical structure

T. S. Eliot

- Believed the poet should be above “personal” expressions of “feeling”
- Believed writing poetry is an impersonal act of creation involving the combination of “individual talent” with the awareness of poetic “tradition”
- “ Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” (1917)
  - Stream of Consciousness
  - Classical allusions

Modern Poetry: *The Objectivists*

- Later, post-war disillusionment caused many to move beyond imagism and favor an even more experimental poetry that truly captured the fractured and uncertain attitude of the nation
- A number of poets—including Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot—became part of the expatriate movement
- William Carlos Williams called his poetry “objectivist,” insisting that a poem is an “object that formally presents its case and its meaning by the very form it assumes”
- Poets like E. E. Cummings stretched boundaries through their wordplay, unique typography, and unusual punctuation
- Archibald MacLeish went one step further, claiming that “a poem should not mean but be”

William Carlos Williams

- No ideas but things
- Beauty and meaning in the “everyday”
- Rhythm—the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables, line breaks, stanza breaks—becomes the essence of the poetic process

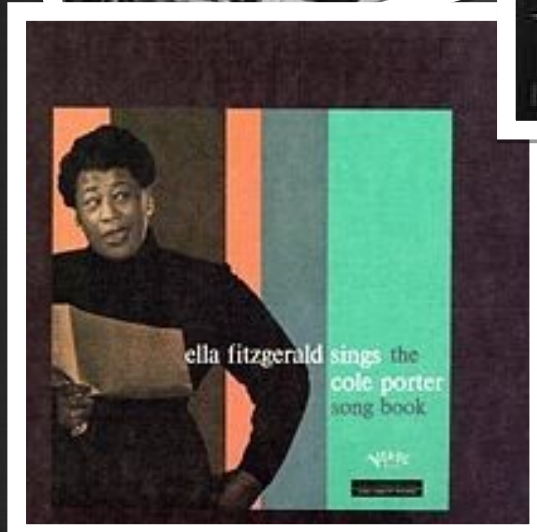
e. e. cummings

- Total experimentation
- Style becomes the driving force behind poetry, with the visual shape or structure of a poem conveying or reinforcing its meaning
  - !Punctuation!
  - CaPiTaLiZaTioN
  - Typography
  - Letters and Lines
  - Margins and S p a c e s
- One critic: “The poems are made to misbe
- “anyone lived in a pretty how town” (1940

Robert Frost

- A traditionalist among the rebels
- Traditional verse forms and conversational language
- Vivid narratives and picturesque portraits of America
  - Sometimes accused of Rockwellian nost
- Popular among the critics and the publ
  - Four Pulitzer Prizes
  - JFK's inauguration
- "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Eveni

Harlem Renaissanc



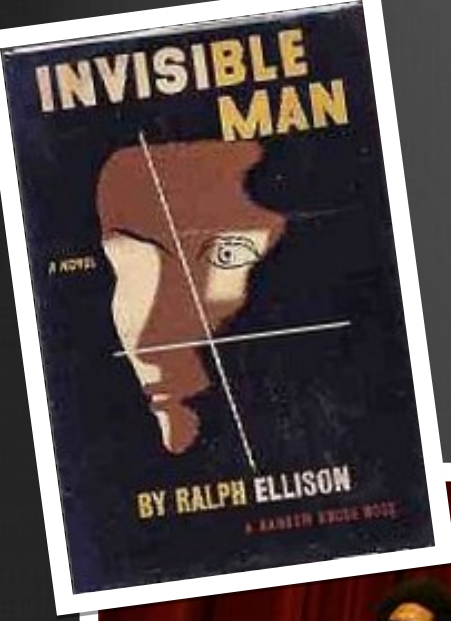
Harlem Renaissance

- In Harlem, a large neighborhood in upper Manhattan, a renaissance was underway for African-American writers, as well as poets, musicians, and other artists
- It began in 1921 with the publication of Countee Cullen's "I Have a Rendezvous with Life," and six months later Langston Hughes' "The Negro Speaks of Rivers"
- What followed was a burst of creative activity by black writers, many of whom were not born in New York but migrated there in order to be at the center of a powerful cultural movement

Harlem Renaissance

- A half century after the abolition of slavery, many black intellectuals and artists believed that the time had come for the “final emancipation” of African Americans: the recognition of their rights to equal status not only as citizens but as vital contributors to American culture
- Riding the tide of the Great Migration, encouraged by previous writers and intellectuals like W. E. B. Du Bois, the Renaissance continued through the 1920s and into the 1930s, before the Great Depression signaled its end
- However, the impact of the Renaissance would be understood for generations to come as more and more African Americans made their presence felt in the arts

Legacy


INVISIBLE MAN
A NOVEL
BY RALPH ELLISON

Toni Morrison
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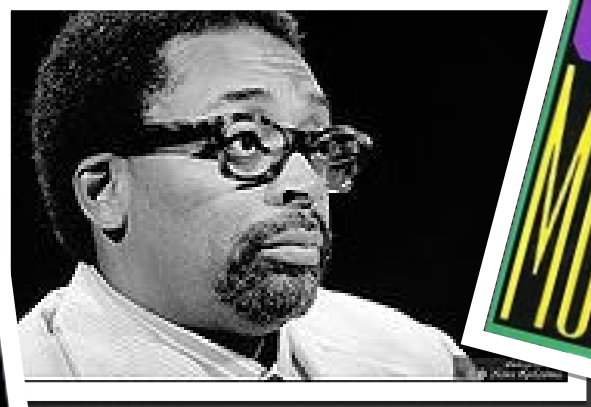
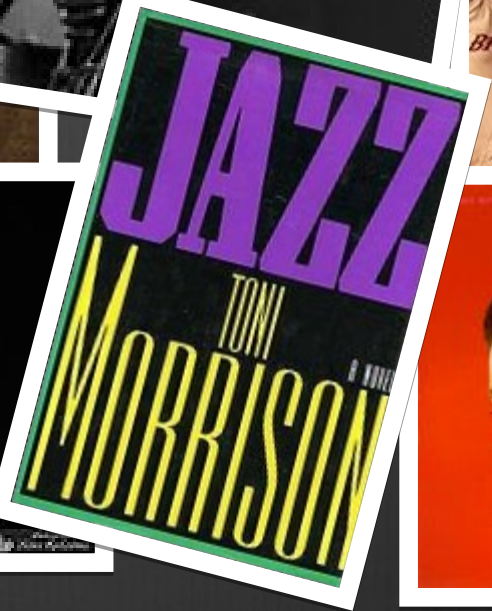
RICHARD PRYOR
Live & Smokin'




JAZZ
TONI
MORRISON

NINA
SIMONE
SILK & SOUL